

**PRACTICE ORGANISATION**



# Is price the real issue?

DENTISTS ARE  
 GENERALLY MORE  
 HUNG UP ON PRICE  
 THAN PATIENTS,  
 WRITES ASHLEY  
 LATTER

Ashley Latter is a business coach who specialises in coaching the Ethical Sales Programme for dentists and support staff. Over 850 people have taken part in the programme over the last three years and it is unique in that coaches people to develop new skills and attitudes that bring about a behaviour change and bottom-line results back in the practices

One of the biggest challenges I find with dentists is achieving the prices they feel they deserve. Sometimes they think of a figure in their head and by the time it comes out, it is smaller and, even then, they are apologetic for the smaller amount they have charging. If this is an issue, then read on.

Don't worry – after working with over 20,000 sales people from all walks of life, from many different industries I find it is not just dentists that have an issue. I have also found that the people that have the biggest challenge with price is the salesperson, or dentists themselves. If you feel that price is going to be an issue, then when you communicate to the patient, you can guarantee that you will sound like price *is* an issue. One of my clients used to judge his patients on how they are dressed, where they lived and what they did for a living, until one day he treated a local gypsy. He eventually signed up for two implants, which totalled over £4,500 worth of business and he paid the whole lot in cash. He eventually went on to treat his wife who also spent over £1,500.

The first thing I find in life is that people will often buy the benefits of the product or

service and not the product itself. For example, people don't buy tooth whitening - they buy a nice, confident smile. So you must communicate that to the patient. They will also decide what to pay on the value they are going to receive from the purchase. Here is another example – if someone is hungry and they haven't eaten all day and they are given a sandwich, how much would they pay for the sandwich? The normal price would perhaps be £2, however, if you know they haven't eaten all day, just how much would that person pay for just a bite of that sandwich?

What has this got to do with dentistry? Well, during a programme I was delivering recently, we were talking about perceived value and what things are worth. One of the clients recalled a recent conversation with a patient. The patient had crooked and discoloured teeth. What would it be worth to the patient to get it sorted out? By asking more questions he found out that the patient was a professional person, who did a lot of sales presentations and is very conscious of this when delivering a presentation. The value to the patient to sort their teeth out is extremely high.

The dentist had told the

patient that the normal price would be £350 per unit. However, put ourselves in the position of the patient who may be thinking that this is too cheap and that the dentist might not be qualified enough to do the work. Interestingly enough, the dentist said he had a cold sweat asking for that amount, and would probably even charged less and asked the patient to think about it. Now I am not telling you to double your prices overnight, however, I personally believe the price issue is all in the dentist's head and not the patient. As long as people are getting a perceived value, and benefits to them, then I feel that patients will pay more for that. Patients buy on value and the benefits you can provide for them.

Think about the last significant purchase you made. It may be a car, washing machine or television. Was the price an issue? What were the buying criteria? Did you buy the cheapest? Or were there other things that were more important? Think of the food you buy in the supermarket - do you buy own brands or named brands?

So here are some simple things to do when presenting your treatment plans to the patient:

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- Find out as much as you can about how much the other person wants the treatment and what it will do for them
- When presenting a solution back to the patients, the first thing you need to tell them is that you can help them and let them know how enthusiastic you are about treating them. If you are passionate about your treatment, then so will the patient. Have you ever bought anything from anyone who was not enthusiastic and barely had a pulse
- Let them know what the end result will be. For example, that they will have white teeth and

the confidence this time to do sales presentations

- Discuss in simple terms the treatment options and plans. Don't get too technical. Speak on the other person's level and use language that they can understand
- Why not change the word 'cost' to 'investment' and the try the following statement. The investment of the entire treatment plan including preparation, lab fees and impressions will only be £500. Then let them know the good news, for example: 'And I can deliver the treatment in the next three weeks, so that you will be

ready for that presentation you have to do'. Now the person is really getting good value. They can have the right treatment, the nice smile and correct treatment – all for £500

- Show them some evidence, such as before and after pictures, some success stories and testimonial letters from happy patients. Third party evidence always helps and backs up what you say
- Finally, don't forget to ask for the fee upfront or a 50% deposit. You can guarantee then that they won't cancel the appointment and then they will be bought into the treatment.

These are just a few tips and ideas that people are now using as a result of taking part in the Ethical Relationship Sales Programme. These words might feel uncomfortable, but after a while, people will get used to it and it will help you to increase the uptake of treatment plans and also, most importantly, achieve the prices you deserve.

Last thought – I heard an accountant once say to me that if you reduced your costs by 1% and increase prices by 1% then your profits will grow by 25%.

If you raised your prices by 1%, do you think you would lose any business? **PD**